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ABSTRACT

Student participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities has declined following the implementation of the C-Average Policy in Washington (District of Columbia) junior and senior high schools. However, few students and advisors attributed the lack of participation to the policy, particularly at the senior high school level. Intended to emphasize the importance of academic achievement, the policy requires students in grades 9-12 who participate in extracurricular and cocurricular activities to have a C-average (2.0 cumulative grade point average) in subjects earning Carnegie credit. The following findings are presented: (1) the policy is more stringent than that of comparable school systems and is opposed by national and local school athletic associations; (2) in most schools, only tutoring of athletic team members during the season of play is emphasized; and (3) work and lack of student interest also have contributed to the decline in participation in athletics in recent years. Recommendations include lowering the required grade-point average and placing equal emphasis on attendance and behavior. Statistical data are presented in four tables. (FMW)

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE C-AVERAGE POLICY

1987 - 1990

(REVISED)

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NOVEMBER 1990

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE C-AVERAGE POLICY

1987 - 1990

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE C-AVERAGE POLICY: 1987 - 1990

Executive Summary

The District of Columbia Board of Education established the C-average policy to emphasize that academic achievement must be the first priority of students served by the system. This policy, effective beginning school year 1986-87, requires students in grades 9-12 to have a C-average (2.0) in subjects which Carnegie credit is earned in order to participate in extra- or co-curricular activities.

After implementation of the policy more attrition was reported in athletics than other extra-curricular activities. One-third of the junior high students and almost half of the senior high students surveyed in 1988 were not participating in any extra-curricular activity with the majority indicating either work or disinterest as the reason. Few students and advisors offered grades as a deterrent to participation, particularly at the senior high school level.

Additional data were collected in Spring 1990. The findings are summarized below:

1) The C-average policy in DCPS is more stringent than that of other comparable school systems; both national and local school athletic associations oppose mandated grade point average requirements for participation.

2) Emphasis is placed only on academic tutoring of team members in most schools and then only during the season of play.

3) While participation in sports has decreased markedly in recent years, the C-average requirement is probably only one contributing cause.

Report recommendations were as follows:

1) Eliminate the cumulative grade point average requirement as D. C. Coaches Association has advised and require a lower grade-point average.

2) In implementing a grade-point average requirement, place equal emphasis on class attendance and behavior.

3) Establish and integrate tutoring programs so that the STUDENT, not just the ATHLETE, is the focus of academic support.

4) Examine the other causes for declining participation in extra-curricular activities and determine the feasibility of continuing certain activities or alternative strategies for implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Background[1]

The District of Columbia Board of Education established the C-average policy to emphasize that academic achievement must be the first priority of students served by the system. This policy, effective for school year 1986-87, requires students in grades 9-12 to have a C-average (2.0) in subjects that Carnegie credit is earned in order to participate in extra- or co-curricular activities. The section of the rule most pertinent to this evaluation is as follows:

> 2209.3 A student in the tenth (10th), eleventh (11th) or twelfth (12th) grade who receives at least a 2.0 ("C") average for their final grades in the immediately preceding school year shall be eligible for participation in co-curricular activities in the first advisory of the current academic year. A first advisory ninth (9th) grade student shall be automatically eligible to participate in co-curricular activities.
>
> 2209.4 A student seeking to begin participation in a co-curricular activity subsequent to the end of the first advisory of an academic year shall have a 2.0 ("C") average for the advisory immediately preceding the one in which the student seeks to participate as well as a 2.0 ("C") cumulative average calculated from the grades received for all advisories in the current academic year.
>
> 2209.5 Once eligible, a student may maintain eligibility for the current academic year only by maintaining a 2.0 ("C") cumulative average calculated from the grades received for all advisories in the current academic year.

Students surveyed in 1987, senior high school principals and extra-curricular advisors surveyed in 1988, agreed that a C-average is a desirable standard which should continue. However, as predicted by a study completed prior to implementation of the policy, the extra-curricular activity experiencing the greatest loss of participants has been interscholastic athletics.

One-third of the junior high students and almost half of the senior high students surveyed in 1988 were not participating in

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[1] The Second Year of the "C" Average Policy District of Columbia Public Schools. November 1988. (Unpublished)

any extra-curricular activity with the majority indicating either work or disinterest as the reason. Of those students who did admit that their grades were the reason for non-participation (9 percent in grades 10-12 and 4 percent in grade 9), fewer still said that they were taking advantage of the tutoring offered. Few of the advisors who reported a decrease in activity participation offered GPA as the reason, particularly at the senior high school level. Participation results reported in 1987 and 1988 suggest that extra-curricular activities are not major incentives for many DCPS students.

Some staff who wanted the C-average policy continued raised reservations about the average selected, the hasty implementation, the impact of the designated standard on the participation of students less able academically, the fact that only carnegie credit courses are included in the averag and that the computation is cumulative.

Superintendent's Request For Additional Information

The Research and Evaluation (R&E) Branch was requested to provide additional information in preparation for the Board's review of the policy. In a meeting with athletic directors from the comprehensive senior high schools in December 1989, R&E agreed to collect additional data addressing the following questions using the data sources indicated:

Question	Data Source
1. Has the number of athletes going to college decreased since the implementation of the C-average requirement?	Annual reports submitted by senior high school athletic directors to the Supervising Director of Athletics
2. What are the GPA requirements of other school systems in the area?	Athletic offices of school systems in the metropolitan area
3. What are the recommendations of national and local organizations?	The executive officers of national and local athletic organizations associated with secondary schools
4. To what extent are tutoring services <u>available</u> to students with GPAs below 2.0?	Administrators of senior high schools
5. To what extent do talented	Intramural and varsity rosters

	athletes participate in intramural and not varsity because they do not have a C-average?	containing GPAs for the first semester, 1989-90 (by student)
6.	To what extent is the C-average being applied in non-athletic extra-curricular activities?	Student rosters (GPA) and membership rosters of extra-curricular and co-curricular organizations, randomly selected
7.	To what extent have varsity athletes dropped out of school since the implementation of the C-average policy?	Varsity rosters, randomly selected, and school records prior to and since the implementation of the C-average requirement?

Seven senior high schools were randomly selected and requested to provide the data needed.

RESULTS

The Number of Athletes Going to College

Statistics for senior high school athletes continuing their education could not be obtained in either senior high schools or in the office of the Supervising Director for Athletics. In a survey of 1988 DCPS graduates conducted by R&E in January 1989, the 320 graduates who responded to a question about their participation in extracurricular activities during high school, including athletics, were more likely to be enrolled in post-secondary education (TABLE 1).

TABLE 1

EXTRA-CURRICULAR PARTICIPATION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (N=320)

	Attending School		
Activity	Yes	No	Total
Athletics	64.7	35.3	10.6
Other Activities	86.3	13.7	57.2
Non-Participants	54.4	45.6	32.2
Total	73.8	26.2	100.0

Grade Average Requirements for Extra-Curricular Participation in Other School Systems

In ten systems contacted[2], NONE required a cumulative grade-point average for participation. Only three school systems require a student to have a C-average for the semester prior to participation (Atlanta, Dallas and Prince George's County). Alexandria, Virginia requires a 1.55 average (in addition to the state's requirement that students must pass five of six classes) for two advisories prior to participation but the student does not become ineligible unless the average for the third advisory is also below 1.55. Other systems either require no failures or not more than one failure the previous semester. Among the systems contacted, only New Orleans had no formal policy.

[2]Alexandria VA, Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Fairfax County, Memphis, Montgomery County, New Orleans, Philadelphia and Prince George's County contacted by phone between February and April 1990.

New Haven Public School System sponsors an after school tutoring and enrichment program with one component specifically designed for athletes. Student athletes are automatically scheduled into this program if their average in major subject areas falls below "C".

Recommendations From Sports Organizations

The National Federation of State High School Associations provide evidence which supports the position that students participating in extra-curricular activities (including athletics) have higher academic performance and attendance than non-participants. National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) cites a research study conducted by the American College Testing Board (ACT) in the late 1970's which indicated that student participation in extra-curricular activity was even more reliable in predicting future success than high school grades, college grades or ACT scores. They support a more positive approach, such as tutoring to improve the quality of academic performance, as an alternative to playing restrictions.

In the belief that sports is a vehicle to improve academic achievement, The American Sports Institute, a nonprofit, educational organization based in California, has developed a program called PASS (Promoting Achievement in School through Sports). PASS was developed in response to California's "No Pass, No Play" rule. The program is a daily, year-long class for athletes based upon the concept "that the principles and skills that lead to success in athletics are the same as those that lead to success in academics." The principles and skills include concentration, balance, relaxation, power, rhythm, flexibility, attitude and instinct. The students set personal goals and complete reading, writing and speaking assignments related to special projects which they select. "In the process, students develop skills in critical thinking, planning, problem solving, working in teams and time management."

Results thus far reported only by the media after a one year pilot operation in one San Francisco public senior high school indicate that student participants experience noticeable improvement in their academic performance and that non-athletes are also requesting permission to enter the program. The pilot testing will be expanded to other San Francisco high schools in September 1990.

Tutorial Programs

The enactment of the C-average policy required schools to establish tutorial programs to assist athletes in maintaining academic eligibility. Interviews of school administrators indicate that two tutorial programs are operating independently in most

schools: one for members of the respective athletic teams when in season organized by the coaching staff and an informal program for the general student body which begins in most schools in either September or October. In general, not much documentation was available from existing school files (such as flyers, schedules, student rosters or records of attendance) suggesting that tutorial support, to the extent that it exists, is only provided informally with little systematic monitoring. Administrators interviewed reported that tutoring is done by teachers or coaches on a volunteer basis except for George Washington University student volunteers at Cardozo and parent and National Honor Society volunteers at Wilson. Cardozo also conducts a tutorial program in preparation for the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) in which athletes are particularly encouraged to participate. Funds to operate after school tutorial programs were provided to selected schools and implemented in March 1990. While attendance at the athletic tutoring sessions was reported to be mandatory, once the specific play season ends, it is up to the student to take advantage of tutorial services if needed.

Participation in Intramural Versus Varsity Sports

The seven senior high schools were requested to provide rosters of intramural and varsity teams in place for the first semester of the 1989-90 school year. The schools indicated that they do not maintain rosters of intramural teams. Therefore, the planned comparisons between the grade-point averages of intramural and varsity participants could not be done.

The C-Average Policy, Varsity Participation and School Retention

The sample senior high schools were requested to provide varsity rosters for school years 1985-86 through 1988-89. These data were to be used to determine the level of participation before and after implementation of the C-average policy and the number of students who dropped out of play for academic reasons.

Useable participation data was received from few schools. Varsity basketball rosters for 1988-89 and 1989-90 were obtained from the Supervising Director for Athletics and varsity football statistics were obtained from copies of the Superintendent's correspondence to the Board. These two sets of data were used to examine quantitative changes over time although the reasons for the change (grades, transfers, etc.) could not be determined.

Basketball

Over three-fourths of the 10th and 11th grade male basketball players eligible to play in 1988-89 continued to be eligible in the 1989-90 school year (TABLE 2). Two of the nine senior high schools

for which data were available had a hundred percent of their players continuing in the second year.

TABLE 2

CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY OF 1988-89 TENTH AND ELEVENTH GRADE BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN 1989-90

	1988/89	1989/90	PROPORTION CONTINUING
ANACOSTIA	5[3]	4	.80
BALLOU	5	2	.40
CARDOZO	10	9	.90
COOLIDGE	11	7	.64
DUNBAR	11	9	.82
EASTERN	NA	NA	NA
MCKINLEY	2	1	.50
ROOSEVELT	4	4	1.00
SPINGARN	NA	NA	NA
WILSON	8	5	.63
WOODSON	9	9	1.00
TOTAL	65	50	.77

Source: Certificate of Eligibility, Supervising Director for Athletics.

Football

The number of students eligible for football in 1984-85 (two years before implementation of the C-average policy) and the changes in the percent of students eligible are reported in TABLE 3.

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[3]Data is for school year 1987-88; the roster for 1988-89 was not available.

TABLE 3

PERCENT OF CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FOOTBALL 1985/86 - 1988/89 AS COMPARED TO THE 1984/85 SCHOOL YEAR

School	# of Stud. (100%) 1984-85	Percent of Change Since 1984-85 1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Anacostia	62	- 25.8	- 37.1	- 59.7	- 62.9
Ballou	54	25.9	- 16.7	- 33.3	- 3.7
Cardozo	55	- 30.9	- 25.4	- 40.0	- 63.6
Coolidge	73	- 43.8	- 45.2	- 63.0	- 58.9
Dunbar	90	- 50.0	- 46.7	- 64.4	- 71.1
Eastern	52	- 3.8	- 19.2	- 36.5	- 25.0
McKinley	62	- 35.5	- 53.2	- 66.1	- 61.3
Roosevelt	55	- 27.3	- 14.5	- 27.3	- 47.3
Spingarn	61	- 39.3	- 55.7	- 67.2	- 88.5
Wilson	55	0.0	- 1.8	- 14.5	- 69.1
Woodson	31	87.1	- 54.8	41.9	9.7
TOTAL	650	- 20.3	- 29.2	- 44.9	- 53.7

Source: Memorandum to Dr. Andrew E. Jenkins, III from Gilbert L. Hoffman, Interim Athletic Director. September 26, 1988.

Eight of the eleven senior high schools experienced decreases (from 3.8 to 50 percent) in the number of students eligible for football the year prior to the implementation of the C-averge policy requirement in 1986-87. In four of the schools - Ballou, Cardozo, Dunbar and Roosevelt - the decreases were higher in 1985-86 than in 1986-87. In only two schools, Ballou and Woodson, were the number of players in 1988-89 comparable to the numbers eligible 1984-85.

Junior High School Participation

At the request of the Athletic Office, an attempt was made to examine the impact of the C-average rule on junior high school students. Ten junior high schools were randomly selected and

requested in April 1990 to submit rosters of athletic participants for years 1985-86 through 1989-90. The schools were to include the sex, grade level and final grade in each of the four core subject areas for each participant on varsity and intramural teams. This information was to be used to examine continued participation of students with grade-point averages above and below 2.0 in junior and senior high school.

Rosters were submitted by two schools and only one included the appropriate years. A written reply from the newly appointed principal at a third school indicated that the requested information could not be located. Given the limitations of the data received, continued participation could not be examined.

Given a hypothetical student with a 1.0 average (equivalent to a "D" which is passing) for the first advisory and who attains a 2.0 average (equivalent to a "C") at the end of the second advisory and maintains that average for the third and fourth advisories, TABLE 4 indicates that the student would not be eligible for extra-curricular activities during the academic year nor the first advisory of the following year according to the current rule. FOR A SPORTS ACTIVITY SUCH AS FOOTBALL, IT WOULD MEAN THAT A STUDENT WOULD BE INELIGIBLE FOR TWO YEARS OF PLAY.

TABLE 4
HYPOTHETICAL CALCULATION OF CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR AN ACADEMIC YEAR

Required Course	Final Course Grade Earned Each Advisory 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Subject 1	D	C	C	C
Subject 2	D	C	C	C
Subject 3	D	C	C	C
Subject 4	D	C	C	C
Points Earned	4	8	8	8
Cum. Points	4	12	20	28
CP/# of Subj.	4/4	12/8	20/12	28/16
GPA	=1.0	=1.5	=1.7	=1.8

KEY: D = 1 point
C = 2 points
CP = Cumulative points
CP/# of subj. = CP divided by number of subjects taken
GPA = Grade-point Average

It should be noted that the DCPS policy mandates a cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 2.0 which requires that the course grade be weighted by its carnegie unit value. Therefore, a course with a carnegie value of "1" is multiplied by the value of the letter grade. Simply averaging grades earned requires only that the total value of the course grades received be divided by the number of courses. As a result, an "A" (equal to 4 points) received in an elective course which is not required would be included in a "grade average" but would not in a GPA. "Grade averaging" would benefit students who earn higher grades in electives than required courses or in required courses with a carnegie unit value of .5 (such as physical education and art). The GPA is the standard operating practice for computing class rank.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this report was to provide specific information to the Superintendent in preparation of a review by the Board of Education of the current C-average requirement for student participation in extra-curricular activity. The questions addressed were:

1. Has the number of athletes going to college decreased since the implementation of the C-average requirement?

2. What are the GPA requirements of other school systems in the area?

3. What are the recommendations of national and local organizations?

4. To what extent are tutoring services <u>available</u> to students with GPAs below 2.0?

5. To what extent do talented athletes participate in intramural and not varsity because they do not have a C-average?

6. To what extent is the C-average being applied in non-athletic extra-curricular activities?

7. To what extent have varsity athletes dropped out of school since the implementation of the C-average policy?

The findings are summarized below.

1) The C-average policy in DCPS is more stringent than that of other comparable school systems; both national and local school athletic association oppose mandated grade point average requirements for participation. The policy addresses only the Board of Education's responsibility for the academic development of students. As currently implemented, the policy is punitive rather than progressive. In fact, given the cumulative C-average requirement, a student with a "D" average (which is passing) for the first advisory, who attains a 2.0 average (equivalent to a "C") at the end of the second advisory and maintains that average for the third and fourth advisories, would not be eligible for extra-curricular activities during the academic year nor the first advisory of the following year according to the current rule. FOR A SPORTS ACTIVITY SUCH AS FOOTBALL, IT WOULD MEAN THAT A STUDENT WOULD BE INELIGIBLE FOR TWO YEARS OF PLAY.

2) Emphasis is placed only on academic tutoring of team members in most schools and then only during the season of play. Since students must have a cumulative C-average in order to be a member of the team, the underachieving student for whom sports participation may be a motivator, is ignored. At present, there does not seem to be formal, structured tutorial services available in every school or an outreach program to attract underachieving or borderline students.

3) While participation in sports has decreased markedly in recent years, the C-average requirement is probably only one contributing cause. Decreases were observed in football before implementation of the C-average requirement and the responses of activity advisors and students indicate that declining interest is also a factor.

Data were not available to ascertain if the number of athletes going to college had decreased since the policy, intramural versus varsity participation, adherence to the policy in non-athletic activities and the drop-out rate of athletes prior to and since the C-average requirement.

Recommendations

1) Eliminate the cumulative requirement as the D. C. Coaches Association has already advised and reduce the grade-point average requirement from the current 2.0 for the advisory prior to participation.

2) In implementing a grade-point average requirement, place equal emphasis on class attendance and behavior. Problems in either area should initiate counseling or other support services where needed.

3) Establish and integrate tutoring programs so that the STUDENT, not just the ATHLETE, is the focus of academic support. If Board policy requires tutorial services, then funding should be provided and the services audited.

4) Examine the other causes for declining participation in extra-curricular activities and determine the feasibility of continuing certain activities or alternative strategies for implementation. This recommendation implies that there must first be a determination as to what aspect of student development is served by the activity.